**Say Yes to Seniors Coalition**

**Advocating for Passage of a Washtenaw County Senior Millage**

**Purpose**

The current population of those over 60 years old in Washtenaw County is in excess of 65,000 – and at nearly 20%, this group is the fastest growing segment of our population. These individuals are a tremendous asset to our community and deserve to be provided the resources and services necessary to age in place and remain vibrant members of our county. Currently, the resources and services available to support them are provided by a hodgepodge of agencies who are limited in their capacity and often struggling to sustain current services. As the 60+ segment of our population grows, we will fall further behind in our ability to meet present and future needs for services unless additional support is garnered. As such, it is vital that we, as Washtenaw County community members, take the steps necessary to ensure that the resources and services available are sufficient for meeting the growing needs we too will have as we age.

The funds generated from this millage would be used to enhance the lives of Washtenaw County older adults and their caregivers. In particular, the funds would be used to address unmet needs and expand current programs and services. These would include but not be limited to: benefits screening, certified home health aides for personal care, child care/grandparent raising grandchildren, congregate meals and home-delivered meals, education, elder abuse prevention, friendly visits, housekeeping, legal assistance, nutrition education and counseling, physical fitness and health, residential maintenance, senior centers, socialization/recreation; outreach, technology connectivity and training, and transportation.

Another important need is the establishment of a Washtenaw County Commission for Senior Services. Its purpose would be to help coordinate the many services provided through the millage dollars and ensure that the needs of county seniors are being met and their lives enhanced. It would also make certain that the millage funds are being distributed equitably and in a cost-effective, managed process.

As detailed in the attached background piece, Washtenaw County is well behind the majority of other counties in Michigan in providing senior services – we are just one of twelve without a senior millage to help provide these services and just one of four counties who do not have a commission or agency on aging to help manage senior services. Compared to other counties, Washtenaw is often providing only half as many units of service for critical needs such as Meals on Wheels, congregate or dine-in meals, adult day care, outreach & advocacy programs, and elder abuse prevention. A senior millage would be used to make these and dozens of other important services more readily available to our Washtenaw County seniors.

*February 17, 2020*